

Teen Talk

Many Teens Are Saying "NO"

DON'T BE FOOLED into thinking most teenagers are having sex. **THEY AREN'T!!** There's a lot to know before you say "yes" to having sex.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT MY BODY?

During the teen years, you may be strongly attracted to another person. Your body may send you messages that make you want to get closer to that person. But your body **won't** tell you how having sex now may harm you.

You may not know that:
Over one million teens become pregnant each year.

Young girls are more likely to have problems during pregnancy.

Babies of young, teen mothers are more likely to be born with serious health problems.

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are at epidemic levels. You may have heard of herpes, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and HIV/AIDS.

STDs may cause pain.
They may cause sterility. Some are incurable and some may even cause death.

Face it! Sex for teens is pretty risky!

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT MY FEELINGS?

Sexual feelings can be pretty strong! So think before you act. Think about your future. Think about the consequences. **Think about yourself!** Ask yourself, "Am I ready to have sex now?"



SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

There's a lot to know before making your decision about whether or not to say "yes" to having sex. Here's a checklist to help you decide:

	YES	NO
♦ Is having sex in agreement with my own moral values?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
♦ Would my parents approve of me having sex now?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
♦ If I have a child, am I responsible enough to provide for its emotional and financial support?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
♦ If the relationship breaks up, will I be glad I had sex with this person?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
♦ Am I sure no one is pushing me into having sex?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
♦ Does my partner want to have sex now?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
♦ Am I absolutely sure my partner is not infected with an STD including HIV/AIDS?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If any of your answers to these questions is "**NO**," then you'd better **WAIT**.



Should I have sex now or should I wait?

It's true some teens decide to go ahead. But the results of your decision will fall on you.

Ask yourself these questions before making up your mind:

- ♦ Can I take full responsibility for my actions?
- ♦ Am I willing to risk STDs including HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, and/or sterility?
- ♦ Can I handle being a single parent or placing my child for adoption?
- ♦ Am I ready and able to support a child on my own?
- ♦ Can I handle the guilt and conflict I may feel?
- ♦ Will my decision hurt others— my parents, my friends?

DECISIONS ABOUT SEX MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISIONS YOU'LL EVER MAKE. SO, THINK BEFORE YOU ACT.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW IF I DECIDE NOT TO HAVE SEX?

Contrary to rumor, lots of teens decide not to have sex. Many teens are worried about hurting the other person's feelings. BUT it's not so hard to say "NO" and still remain friends. For example, you might say:

- ♦ "I like you a lot, but I'm just not ready to have sex."

- ♦ "I don't believe in having sex before marriage. I want to wait."
- ♦ "I enjoy being with you, but I don't think I'm old enough to have sex."
- ♦ "I don't feel like I have to give you a reason for not having sex. It's just my decision."

ALSO, there are different ways to show affection for another person without having sexual intercourse.

Try to avoid situations where sexual feelings become strong. "Stopping" is much harder then. Talk about your feelings and what seems right for you.

If you and your partner can't agree, then maybe you need to find someone else whose beliefs are closer to your own.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT PRESSURE?

It comes from everywhere... advertising, friends, movies, television, shows, songs, and books.

**BE POPULAR
BE PART OF THE IN-CROWD
BE A MAN / BE A WOMAN
EVERYBODY'S DOING IT
SEX IS FUN
IF IT FEELS GOOD, DO IT**

BUT stop and think. Will having sex really make you more popular, more mature, or more desirable? Probably not. In fact, having sex may even cause your partner to lose interest. The one sure thing about having sex is that you may be in for problems you don't know how to handle.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT BOY/GIRL RELATIONSHIPS?

They're great...but good relationships don't develop overnight. They take time. Sex is not what makes a relationship work.

Watch out for **lines** like, "**If you care about me, you'll have sex with me.**"

- ♦ You don't have to have sex with someone to prove you like or love them.
- ♦ Sex should never be used to pay someone back for something...all you have to say is "Thank you."
- ♦ Sharing thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and most of all, mutual respect is what makes a relationship strong.
- ♦ Saying "No" can be the best way to say "I love you."

WHERE CAN I GET INFORMATION THAT WILL HELP ME?

If you want further information or help, talk to someone who cares about you. Ask your parents, an older brother or sister, other family members, or an adult you feel will listen and give you good advice. There are people and organizations in your community who want to help— your family doctor; your priest, minister, or rabbi; your school nurse or counselor; or local health-care providers.